

# MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS

Review Material for 'Blues' Program

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Artist In Residence

The 'Blues' is America's oldest art form. It is the music that was created and performed originally in the south by Black People whose forefathers were brought to this country as slaves from the West Coast of Africa. Music was a great part of the tribal way of life. There were many ceremonies for which there were just as many rhythms and chants to which the people dance and sang.

Some of the instruments used to play the music were the Kalimba also known as the 'thumb piano', the Drum, (there was many kinds of Drums of different sizes that made different sounds). The difference in the sounds is called 'Pitch'.

Included among the instruments were those made of brass and other metals. Most of the sounds were made by striking the instruments. When an instrument is played by striking or hitting it, the instrument is a Percussion instrument.

When the Black Man arrived in America he was not taught to read or write, but the religious teachings of the Baptist and Methodist Churches were passed on to him. Around 1620, a man named Doctor Isaac Watts composed music to the Book of Psalms. He was an English physician and minister. These songs became known as 'The Watts Hymns'. Later, a black man named Charles Wesley created a different way of singing Hymns.

The Hymns were 'lined out' or sung very slowly with the leader singing a line at a time and then the congregation would sing the same line together. We can see now how the spirituals and inspirational songs influenced the 'Blues' by listening to the lyrics and studying the pattern of 'Motherless Child'.

MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd)

MOTHERLESS CHILD

A Line Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child  
Repeated Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child  
Repeated Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child  
B Line A long way from home, a long way from home

The 'Blues' songs that the students will learn to compose use much the same pattern except they use the A Line twice. Example:

BLUES FOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

Written by Keith Mosher, Age 11,  
Newberry Elementary School, Chicago, 1977

A Line Just the other day, my friend Hubert Humphrey died  
Repeated Just the other day, my friend Hubert Humphrey died  
B Line When I first heard about it, I hung my head and cried

WORK SONGS

'Work Songs' were sung by Black men sentenced to spend time on the 'Chain Gang' for laws and other regulations they were found guilty of breaking. Again, we can see how the 'Blues' we hear today in Hip-Hop and Rap continued to develop.

A Line Breaking up big rocks on the Chain Gang, breaking rocks and serving my time  
A Line Breaking up big rocks on the Chain Gang, 'cause I been convicted of crime  
B Line Hold it steady right there while I it, well, I reckon that ought' a get it  
Chorus I'm working and working, but I still got so terribly long to go

## MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd)

### COUNTRY BLUES

The 'Blues' as a musical form is broken up into two groups. They are the 'Country Blues' and the 'Urban Blues'.

The 'Country Blues' tells of situations and experiences of the people who lived and worked on plantations (farms) in the South. They were very poor and were forced to work nine months a year so they could eat and have a roof over their head the other three months. So, the Country Blues many times expressed the same feelings that the 'Work Songs' did, except there were no chains on the people's feet.

#### BIG BOSS MAN by Willie Dixon

A Line        Big Boss Man, can't you hear me when I call?  
Repeated     Big Boss Man, can't you hear me when I call?  
B Line        You ain't so big, you just tall, and that's all

Around 1910, the news came to the South from the North that there were more and better opportunities in the North for the Black and the poor. So many came to the North to seek a better way of life for themselves and their families.

They settled in places like Gary, Indiana and the South side of Chicago, Illinois because of the steel mills that offered them employment.

Many 'Blues' musicians were included in the pilgrimage because the people who listened to the 'Blues' were now able to go to the clubs. So, the musicians earned a better living as well. Things seemed to be so much better until the Great Depression came and many found themselves unemployed, unable to support their families and totally unprepared to cope. So much so that many wished to be back in the South. The 'Blues' expressed from these feelings became known as the 'Urban Blue'.

## MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd)

### STORMY MONDAY BLUES

by T. Bone Walker

A Line        They call it 'Stormy Monday' but Tuesday is just as bad  
Repeated    They call it 'Stormy Monday' but Tuesday is just as bad  
B Line        Wednesday is worst, and Thursday is O' so sad

The first 'Blues' record was made by a Black woman named Mamie Smith on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1920. The song was 'Crazy Blues' and sold over 75,000 records. It was released on the Okeh record label. Other famous "Blues" artists include: Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday, Willie Dixon (Cadillac Records movie), B.B King, and Ray Charles. These artists, their stories and their music are shared in this program.

Today's music is listed under many genres, such as: Rock 'N Roll, R & B (Rhythm & Blues), Country & Western, Hip-Hop and Rap, but when we listen, we can understand how the 'Blues' have been the major influence in today's music. In fact, the 'Rolling Stones' got their name from one of Willie Dixon's songs.

Because the 'Blues' came from a People with a common background, the 'Blues' (as an art form) is a Folk Art. It is played and sung all over the world by people of all races. Music is the Universal language and although different kinds of music come from different cultures, the primary purpose of Music is to communicate. Just as the people of Africa used their music to celebrate, to send messages and to worship their gods, we today still communicate our feelings and experiences through music.

We will teach how the 'Blues' can be incorporated with IT technology to create today's music. At the end of the program, the students will produce and star in an event performing the 'Blues' songs they created.

MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd)

INSTRUMENTS USED TO ACCOMPANY STUDENTS AT EVENT

<u>INSTRUMENT</u>	<u>MUSICIANS</u>
Drums-----	TBA
Bass-----	"
Guitar-----	"
Piano-----	"
Harmonica-----	"
Vocalist/MC-----	Shelley Fisher
Guest Artist-----	One Female Blues Artist

INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED FOR PROGRAM

Harmonicas-----	20
Acoustic Guitars-----	4

PATRONS

Funding in the form of donations for the project will be solicited from the Las Vegas Community, Las Vegas Casino industry, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

SUMMATION

The program will start with the 2024 school semester, coordinated with school's schedule, and be taught twice a week. At the end of the twelve-week program, an event will be created by the students where they will perform the 'Blues' songs they have created, accompanied by five professional musicians. The event will be digitally recorded for posterity to demonstrate the success of the program. results not only in their self-esteem, but progress in their writing and communication skills as well. Nevada currently ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> on the most educated

states with an educational score of 32. The ‘Blues’ program will increase not only the scores of the students as was documented in Chicago, Illinois where the reading, expressive writing, and self-esteem overall scores improved significantly.

- Improvement in communications skills
- Knowledge of ‘Blues’ history
- Writing skills
- Self esteem
- Information Technology in today’s music
- Performance skills

BUDGET

Artist in Residence-----	\$25,000.00
Assistant Artist in Residence-----	12,000.00
Guest Artists-----	12,000.00
Equipment (rental/purchase) -----	2,500.00
Audio/Visual Documentation of Event-----	1,500.00
Teaching Materials-----	500.00
<b>Total-----</b>	<b>\$53,500.00</b>